

The Newsletter



Volume no 25 Issue 10 November 2018

SBKA website www.somersetbeekeepers.org.uk



Art Installation

For those who didn't receive the photograph with the email, which was circulated early in October, this is what all the fuss was about.

In the glorious heat of July I received a phone call from Hauser & Wirth, international art dealers and owners of the somewhat controversial galleries at Durslade Farm, Bruton. They asked if I could let them have a colony of bees to place on an art installation during October. I assured them that there was no way that I would subject bees to such treatment, and from their description had guessed that the 'artist' concerned was Pierre Huyghe, who has placed similar pieces in exhibitions around Europe.

I thought that I had made it clear that honey bees exposed to the elements would not last very long in the sort of summer that we were experiencing, let alone in October, and I thought that was an end to it. On October 3rd I received an email from a third party letting me know that this 'art installation' was in place and that the bees didn't seem to be doing too well. It can be seen from the photo that there aren't many bees left. They are clinging to the base of the artificial comb, but they are few in number.

I rang Hauser & Wirth immediately to express my deep concern regarding the danger to the bees. They told me that they were only exposed for a few hours each day, and again I tried to point out the hazards to the bees. Then I asked all our members to contact them as well. It seems that they were inundated with calls and emails. One of our members even contacted the RSPCA, but bees are, apparently, outside their remit. By the end of the same day, several of us had received an email from the regional director, Alice Workman, saying that they had obviously been misguided in erecting this thing, and that it would be taken away, and the bees re-homed as soon as possible. It was gone by the next day, although I doubt that the bees are doing very well, unless they are placed in a nuc. box and fed, fed, fed.

Let's hope that nobody else is silly enough to try something similar, especially after being assured that it was a non starter.

Somerton Beekeepers on Tour

Saturday 6th October saw two of our members talking about bees and bee-keeping at Langport library. The 'friends of the library' had organised a morning focusing on local crafts and we were invited to attend.

We set up our stall on Friday afternoon and had a presence in the library on Saturday from 9.30 to 12.30. There was quite a lot of interest and Fred and Eric were kept busy talking to the public. Library staff felt the event had been a success.

As a bi-product some Apiary honey was sold and polish too. Perhaps we can increase public awareness by taking part in other or similar events.

Eric McLaughlin

Vice chirman

End of a successful season

For some it has ben an excellent season, with record harvests, while others were recovering from the battering of 2017, followed by late off season losses. Many beekeepers have reported losing at least one colony during the snowy interruption to Spring on April 2nd.

With your bees all tucked up and fed for the winter, you will, hopefully, only be hefting them every week, to ensure that they have enough stores to see them through. An easy way of doing this is with a cheap set of luggage scales, and a screw eye placed in the hive floor on either side. Lift (heft) one side and note the weight, then lift the other side, and add the two weights together. Surprisingly, they can be different.

This isn't an accurate measure of the total weight of the hive because you don't actually lift the whole thing off the stand, and some weight is still being taken by the stand. It's worth remembering that a cheap set of luggage scales won't be totally reliable, but you will get a picture. Each week you will see that the weight is dropping, and this tells you how the bees are doing.

There are times in the depths of a dank, dreary winter, when the air is laden with moisture, that the hives will actually put on weight, and this is not because the bees have found a secret stash of food, but because the wood of

the hive has absorbed moisture from the atmosphere, so please allow for that in your calculations.

If in the cooler months the weight is getting worryingly low, you should feed fondant. This is a thick paste made from sugar and water, and should have the consistency of fudge. It isn't difficult to make, although some people get into a flap about it. Buying bakers' fondant and other non beekeeping products could mean that you are introducing strange chemicals into the hive. Beekeepers' fondant is readily available, but it isn't cheap. Fondabee from Bee Equipment Ltd is £1.98 per kg + p&p. Sugar can be bought for 50p per kg.

Fondant recipe

This is, basically, a recipe for fudge, but without butter or flavouring. The addition of citric acid or lemon juice will invert the sugar, turning it into fructose and glucose. This will slow down the speed at which it spoils. It will take 1gm of citric acid, which is the amount contained in 20g of lemon juice.

You will need 1 large saucepan 1 hand or electric mixer, a cooking thermometer & moulds (semi transparent take away food containers are ideal)

1. 1 kg granulated sugar, 300ml water, 20g of lemon juice. Pour sugar, water and lemon juice into saucepan and bring to the boil, stirring occasionally.
2. Remove lid and check temperature with cooking thermometer, continue on a rolling boil with lid off until temperature reaches 234°F (112°C).
4. Remove from heat and cool to around 160°F (71°C).
5. Whip with mixer (preferably electric) until mixture begins to turn opaque and creamy in colour.
6. Pour into containers and replace lid, otherwise it will attract moisture.
7. Allow to cool undisturbed. If you can remember sugar mice, that is what it should look like.
8. To feed bees, remove lid & place inverted tubs over the feed hole in crown board, immediately above brood chamber. Place an eke on crown board and replace roof. An eke is a frame about 50mm high and the same outline as the hive. It simply ekes out a little room to put things in.

It is the stirring while cooling which ensures that it doesn't set like a rock. Just like soft set honey, stirring stops the crystals from bonding to each other.

Note: If you intend to store your fondant, keep it in tightly sealed containers in a cool and dry place. Don't feed too much to the bees at one time, as it will attract moisture, become gooey and run through the feed hole.

If you are buying fondant, make sure that it contains no additives which could be harmful to bees.



When thinking how cool it is at present and looking forward to the cooler months, remember that this photo was taken in mid October, as evidenced by the ivy in bloom in the background. Yes, It is a bee sucking sweetness from a blackberry.

Just when you thought you had seen it all



Saving HONEY BEES, by simply giving them a home. It works like a "bird-box". Real, direct and immediate action.

"Bees for Bees Sake" is my mantra.

No Beekeeper Needed

No Training Needed.

No Faffing or Stuff Needed!

All natural alternative beehive

All instructions and everything you need to get started, in one, simple, handy kit. It's "Grow Your Own" beekeeping

A "GARDENERS BEEHIVE" requires no interaction with the bees. It's easier and more affordable than all other beekeeping systems. In fact, this is not beekeeping but rather "honey-bee-hosting". It works like a "bird-

box", but for "honey-bees." This is because it's a "MOCK-TREE-STUMP" rather than a beehive.

From over forty years of observing bees in the wild. I have designed, built and perfected, an ideal home, or as close as dammit. Using the natural habits and rhythm of honey-bees. Working with nature, rather than plundering it. Because mimicking a tree stump, which is the honey-bees' natural habitat, is best. Here are some of the qualities they look for in nature : shape, size, smell and essentially beneficial bugs-insects and mycelium.

This then resulting in the "Gardeners' Beehive" and the successes speak for themselves.

All for just £267 including p & p

Chris Park - evening meeting - October 11th

Well! Chris certainly did not disappoint. If you were expecting quirky, then you were certainly well catered for. He gave an in depth view of various forms of skep beekeeping and touched on alvearies, as well as French square pyramid style skeps. The sheer number of skeps that he brought along, was impressive, taking up two six foot tables.

He did promote bee stings as a cure for rheumatoid arthritis, claiming that his mother had received regular stings, by choice, and no longer needs her NHS prescribed methotrexate. I found this to be particularly interesting. As a fellow sufferer who probably receives a good deal more stings than his mother, I haven't noticed any relief as a result. I suppose it could be said that I have no idea how bad my arthritis would be had I not been stung so much.



There were many references to medieval beekeeping connections, and Chris believes that there is no evidence of beekeeping in England prior to the Roman invasion, but that the word 'skep' has the same root as scoop, skip and basket. He made great play of not having to kill the bees in order to harvest the honey and is an advocate of 'driving' bees from one skep to another, in order to collect the harvest without culling the colony, and talked of the Pettigrew system of using a lower skep and an upper, which the bees access through a three inch diameter hole. The other term for this is a depriving skep, which means that the beekeeper can harvest the honey by depriving the bees of the top basket, without doing any damage to the bees themselves.

In order to maintain healthy colonies Chris let's his bees swarm, and has been working in liaison with Ron Hoskins, the Swindon beekeeper, who claims to have bred hygienic bees. Outside combs are removed at regular intervals to allow the bees to build new comb in its place. As in conventional removable frame beekeeping, where frames and foundation are provided about every two years, Chris removes the bees and comb from his skeps regularly and lets the bees start from scratch.

Work Party - Saturday November 3rd

Having an apiary where we can hold meetings, teach new beekeepers, and in good times, raise nucleus colonies for new beekeepers, means that regular upkeep of all the amenities is essential.

We try to make it as painless as possible, and a group of unsung heroes spend quite a bit of time just getting on with necessary stuff, but every now and again, they need some serious input from other members. This is such a time. We need to trim around the building, prune the hedging, and take hardwood cuttings to fill spaces in our hedging, and as always, there is cleaning of hive parts.



Please help us to keep the apiary clean, tidy and an asset to be proud of. Come along with your trimmers, secateurs, blow torches, paint scrapers, sanders and paint brushes.

There will be cakes and biscuits.

Apiinvert. Syrup ready to feed bees. Unlike sugar solution it requires no mixing, more readily accepted and less work required for the bees to invert (not wasting energy), more close to a natural food.

1 - 4 boxes @ 16 Kg £23 each, 5 + boxes £22 each

Apifonda. If you are venturing on a Queen rearing project this fondant is what you need. Very similar to Apiinvert, it is a paste not a liquid. If a colony becomes light through the course of the winter a dollop of fondant could well be the difference between life and death of the bees.

The Apiinvert can be fed as a 'gee up' in the spring, emergency feeding during the 'June gap' and of course at the end of the season when preparing for winter. 1 x 2.5 Kg bag £4.75, 1 box 5 x 2.5 Kg £22, 2 + boxes £21 each

Foundation. National brood and super, 14 x 12 brood, 16 x 10 brood

Eddie Howe. email:- redrascal@tiscali.co.uk Mobile 07812 738793 Telephone 01458 2721144

Asian Hornet Action Teams

All twelve divisions of Somerset BKA have now agreed to take part in the NBU, DEFRA and BBKA initiative of providing a lead for their division, so that the almost inevitable arrival of Asian Hornets in Somerset can be dealt with appropriately.

On October 24th I was again in Roscoff, Brittany and re-visited the ivy bushes close to the ferry port where I had seen a few

Asian hornets last year. It was about 10 seconds after I arrived that I saw the first one, and then more and more. **There were a lot more than there had been last year**, and it was later in the season. I know we have been banging on about this since the first nest reported in Tetbury in 2016, but another nest was found in North Devon last year. This year five have been found. That is quite a step up, and given that the ones I saw were literally 500 metres from a ferry due to leave for Plymouth only three hours later, it doesn't take much imagination to see that it is now a case of when, not if they arrive in large numbers.



Somerton BKA Annual General Meeting

As mentioned in last month's edition of this newsletter, our AGM will be held on Thursday November 15th, in The Parish Rooms in Somerton, TA11 7NB. Unlike most of our meetings, the AGM starts at 7.00pm. This is in order to get the necessary business out of the way, and allows for a good old natter afterwards.

Although the chairman's post can be held for no longer than three years, all other posts are open ended, but any officers can be replaced at any AGM. There are two officers in particular, who would willingly stand down if a replacement could be found. They have both given many years of service to the division and will, no doubt, continue to do so.



**Mike's
Bee
Supplies**

Just phone before you call
T: 01278 445158
E: mikes-bees@outlook.com
www.mikes-beesupplies.co.uk

Foundation

We take
Cash or Card
(no cheques)

Jars

Hives

Suits

And more!

Find us at
72 Wembdon Hill
Wembdon
Bridgwater
Somerset.
TA6 7PZ

PayPal
VISA MasterCard Maestro

South East Division Honey Show - Castle Cary, Sat. October 20th



Some Somerton members were asked to place some entries as South East Division were holding their second ever show and wanted to boost the entries. Alison Dykes, Stewart Gould and Sally Lye all submitted entries and did quite well, scooping four first places, and three seconds. Sally gained a second place for

her run honey and this picture took first place in the photographic section for Stewart Gould, but pride of place goes to Alison Dykes who was awarded the Blue Ribbon (Best in Show) for her run honey.

Bee of the month



Short haired bumblebee (*bombus subterraneus*)

This small bumblebee queen only measures 17mm, with workers a mere 11mm. The original British population went extinct in the late 1980s. In 2009 the Short-haired bumblebee partnership was formed between Natural England, the Bumblebee Conservation Trust,

Hymettus and the RSPB. The partnership's initial plan was to bring Short-haired bumblebee queens back to the UK from New Zealand (where the population are direct descendants of the now extinct UK population), however due to differing seasons attempts to captive-rear and export queens had limited success; results from genetic analysis also showed high levels of in-breeding, making the bees unsuitable for establishing a UK population.

In spring 2012, with the co-operation of local and national bee experts in Sweden, up to 100 queen bees were collected from two linear-transects in Skåne, southern Sweden, where good numbers of Short-haired bumblebees were found in 2011. These bees were re-introduced to an area in Kent where they are monitored by The Bumblebee Conservation Trust.

From 2017 the project focused on establishing whether a Short-haired bumblebee population had established by completing genetic analysis of all Short-haired bumblebees found. After three years the results will be reviewed and it will be decided whether any further re-introductions are required.

By courtesy of the Bumblebee Conservation Trust

Dates for your diary

**Apiary work party
10.00am**

Saturday November 3rd
General tidying, hive cleaning
Strimming & hardwood cuttings

Somerton BKA AGM
Thursday November 15th - 7.00 pm
Somerton Parish Rooms
TA11 7NB

Beginners' Beekeeping Course
Wednesdays Jan 16th, 23rd & 30th, then
Feb. 6th, 13th & 20th.
All sessions start at 7.30 pm
Tor Rugby Club,
Lowerside Lane, Glastonbury
BA6 9BH

President

Jackie Mosedale
01458 241146

Chairman

Fred Clarke
01278 722830

Vice Chairman

Eric McLaughlin
jandemclaughlin@gmail.com
01823 698204

Secretary

Jackie Mosedsale
01458 241146
jackiemosedale@gmail.com

Treasurer

Steve Horne
01278 662335

Librarian

Sarah Kent
01749 670423

Honey Show sub committee

David Rose, Alison Dykes,
Fred Clarke

Newsletter Editor

Stewart Gould
01749 860755
somertonbees@btinternet.com

Events Programme

Joe King
01749 890357

County Delegate

Andy Bonney

Deputy Delegates

Stewart Gould
Sally Lye
Sarah North
Keith Sturgess

Apiary Manager

Catherine Fraser
01935 824711

Extraction Equipment Loan

John Speirs
01458 241831